

MINUTES
TRANSYLVANIA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
October 23, 2017 – REGULAR MEETING

The Board of Commissioners of Transylvania County met in regular session on Monday, October 23, 2017 at 7:00 p.m. in Commissioners Chambers at the County Administration Building, located at 101 S. Broad Street, Brevard, NC.

Commissioners present were Chairman Larry Chapman, Jason Chappell, and Vice-Chairwoman Page Lemel. Commissioner Mike Hawkins was out of town. Commissioner Kelvin Phillips was absent due to illness. Also present were County Manager Jaime Laughter, County Attorney Misti Bass, and Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan.

Media: *The Transylvania Times* – Derek McKissock

There were approximately 30 people in the audience.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Larry Chapman presiding declared a quorum was present and called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

WELCOME

Chairman Chapman welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the members of the public for participating in their local government. He introduced Commissioners and staff in attendance.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Doug Poad: The Chestnut Mountain Quilters of the See Off Community made a beautiful quilt to commemorate the County's Sesquicentennial Anniversary in 2011 and it was raffled off to support a local scholarship. Mr. Poad sold the winning raffle ticket to Dr. Emily Sawyer. He recently reconnected with her and learned that while she really liked the quilt, she wanted to donate it to the County for prominent display for all to enjoy. Mr. Poad presented the quilt to Commissioners on behalf of Dr. Sawyer and the See Off Community.

Larry Wilson: Mr. Wilson said he has heard many times over the last few years how badly a new courthouse is needed. He said he does not see how a new courthouse would ever be a benefit to our children. Mr. Wilson asked Commissioners to seriously consider the priorities of the County. He is concerned about education and having adequate facilities for learning. Mr. Wilson pointed out that a new Courthouse will not change the mindset of criminals and make the community safer, but adequate facilities will make a difference in the lives of children and their education and thus that is where Commissioners' priorities should be.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

The Manager requested to remove Item VIII-B Revisions to Sign Control Ordinance and Item VIII-C Revisions to Scenic Corridor Designation Ordinance under New Business, at the request of the Planning Board. There were no agenda modifications from Commissioners.

Commissioner Lemel moved to accept the modified agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Chappell moved to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted, seconded by Commissioner Lemel and unanimously approved.

The following items were approved:

MINUTES

The Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, October 10, 2017 and following met in closed session in which the minutes were sealed. The minutes were approved as submitted.

DISCOVERY, RELEASE AND MONTHLY SETTLEMENT REPORT

Each month the Tax Administrator has a listing of proposed releases for that month. The Board of Commissioners has the responsibility of approving the releases. For the month of September, total tax dollars released was \$2,450.91 and refunds totaled \$2,957.92. Commissioners approved the September 2017 report as submitted.

VETERANS DAY PROCLAMATION

In 2009, the Board of Commissioners established a Veterans Day Committee that is responsible for developing a program to honor the veterans of our community on Veterans Day. Chairman Chapman serves as the chairman of that committee. For several years, Commissioners have approved a proclamation honoring Veterans Day. The proclamation will be presented and read at the Veterans Day Ceremony on Friday, November 10, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. at the Courthouse Gazebo. Commissioner Lemel read aloud the proclamation for the benefit of the public. Commissioners approved Proclamation 29-2017 Veterans Day 2017 which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

RESOLUTION ALLOWING RETIRING OFFICER TO PURCHASE HIS SERVICE HANDGUN-EDDIE LANCE

Eddie Lance retired from the Sheriff's Office effective August 1, 2017. NCGS 120-187.2 allows the governing board to award to a retiring member the service gun of the retiring member. Sheriff Mahoney requested Commissioners approve a resolution allowing Mr. Lance to purchase his service handgun for the price of \$1.00. Commissioners expressed their appreciation for Mr. Lance's service. Commissioners approved Resolution 32-2017 Allowing Retiring Officer to Purchase His Service Handgun which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

RESOLUTION ALLOWING RETIRING OFFICER TO PURCHASE HIS SERVICE HANDGUN-JAY SMITH

Jay Smith retired from the Sheriff's Office effective August 25, 2017. NCGS 120-187.2 allows the governing board to award to a retiring member the service gun of the retiring member. Sheriff Mahoney requested Commissioners approve a resolution allowing Mr. Smith to purchase his service handgun for the price of \$1.00. Commissioners expressed their appreciation for Mr. Smith's service. Commissioners approved Resolution 33-2017 Allowing Retiring Officer to Purchase His Service Handgun which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of these minutes.

REQUEST FOR REMOVAL TO STATE MAINTAINED SECONDARY ROAD SYSTEM

This request is being initiated by the NC Department of Transportation. Several years ago a portion of Lyons Mountain Road was realigned and included a new bridge over the French Broad River. The new alignment and bridge were added to the State Maintained Secondary Road System. A recent review of maps and documents by the NCDOT revealed that the old portion of the road was not removed from the system. NCDOT is requesting approval of an SR-2 form to finalize the removal of a portion of Lyons Mountain Road from the State Maintained Secondary Road System. Commissioners approved the

request by the NCDOT to remove a portion of Lyons Mountain Road from the State Maintained Secondary Road System.

PRESENTATIONS/RECOGNITIONS

CARE COALITION PRESENTATION: "OUR TRANSYLVANIA CARES ABOUT KIDS"

Karen Gorman, Program Director of the C.A.R.E. Coalition, introduced Board Chairman Joe Cohen to give a history of the organization. Mr. Cohen stated that the Coalition brings together community leaders and interested community members to solve the problems of drug abuse and underage drinking, an increasing problem in this community. The Coalition originally came into existence as a result of a rise in deaths due to the opioid crisis. Dr. Cohen said rehabilitating people with addiction is very difficult and using law enforcement as a tool to prevent people from using drugs does not work either. The key is prevention, specifically with youth. The Coalition is utilizing a Drug Free Communities grant to educate youth about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. With that, it is important that young people have things to do, so the Coalition developed a new campaign to accomplish these goals.

Kristen Gentry, the Youth and Community Outreach Coordinator, stated that one of the things that makes the Coalition so strong is its collaboration across sectors and with various community stakeholders and she recognized those in attendance at the meeting. The Coalition implements evidence-based strategies that reduce and prevent substance abuse. They do this through community change, as well as prioritizing young people who they believe are the County's most important local resource. The Coalition wants to show young people that the Coalition and the community as a whole value them, support their sense of adventure, and are working to create a great place for them to grow up. Ms. Gentry introduced a representative from their youth coalition, Teens Advocating for Future Youth, aka TAFFY.

Madison Murr is a senior at Davidson River School and a member of TAFFY, a group of that speaks out on teen issues through education and empowerment. This group implores the community to value kids just as much as they value Transylvania County's natural resources and cultural opportunities. Young people are naturally thrill seekers and are going to take risks, but it is their hope that the community will stand by their side to help them take the right risks, ones that keep them healthy and make them grow. Ms. Murr requested Commissioners embrace their sense of adventure and their right to grow up in a safe, healthy place free of substance abuse and underage drinking. She asked Commissioners to pledge to value the safety and health of the County's youth and make them a priority in their decisions. She said when Transylvania County is better for young people, it is better for everyone.

Ms. Gentry requested Commissioners support and sign the C.A.R.E. Coalition Partner Pledge.

Commissioner Lemel expressed support of the Board signing the pledge. Chairman Chapman asked that this item be placed on the November 14 agenda for action and when a full Board is in attendance. He thanked the Coalition for the important work they are doing in the community.

NEW BUSINESS

REQUEST TO APPLY FOR GOVERNORS CRIME COMMISSION GRANTS

Chief Deputy Eddie Gunter presented this item. He reported that the Governors Crime Commission has been a source of grant funding for the history of law enforcement at the local level. The Transylvania County Sheriff's Office has been awarded numerous grants through this process over the years and has submitted a request to Commissioners to apply for two new grants.

The first grant is a 50% matching grant to purchase body cameras. With these funds, the Sheriff's Office intends to replace current cameras and increase the number of officers wearing them. The Sheriff's Office currently has about 25 body cameras in service. Some of the body cameras currently being used are three years old and are at their serviceable limit. The model utilized by the Sheriff's Office is no

longer being made and parts will either become limited or obsolete. In addition, the docking station used to download the camera footage will not be compatible with the new camera model, so once the first camera is replaced it will be necessary to purchase the new docking station at a cost of \$1,495. The grant amount is \$15,000, requiring a \$7,500 match.

Chief Deputy Gunter pointed out it is the policy of the Sheriff's Office that officers are required to activate their body cameras on all service calls and traffic stops. They may elect to turn off the cameras during a sensitive issue. They may also elect to turn on the cameras when a casual encounter escalates for some reason. He reported that since officers started wearing body cameras, the number of complaints against officers has dropped by nearly two thirds.

The second grant is a non-matching grant and will cost the County nothing. It is in the amount of \$24,500. If approved, these funds will be used to purchase equipment identified as a dire need during the manhunt a few months ago. The equipment consists of GPS units capable of communicating between units and GPS transmitters that will relay the officers' locations back to Incident Command in real time. This equipment is important for officer accountability and safety, as radio communications often fail in our rugged terrain. This equipment is just some of the tools needed for officers to do their jobs safely, more efficiently, and have a better accountability of the tasks they perform.

Chief Deputy Gunter asked Commissioners to consider approval of the two applications to the Governors Crime Commission for the purchase of much needed equipment at minimal cost to the County. If approved, the first application phase is due in January 2018 and the final application phase is due in April 2018, with the grant award expected in October 2018.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the two applications to the Governors Crime Commission for the purchase of much needed equipment at minimal cost to the County, including the \$7,500 match, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES POSITION REQUEST

Interim Social Services Director Darrell Renfroe presented this item. He reported that the department is working hard to make positive improvements in the Child Protective Services/Foster Care division. This request is an effort to do that as well.

There are currently 59 children in foster care in Transylvania County. Of those, 23 children are placed outside of Transylvania County. The assigned Foster Care Social Workers have to transport foster children to their placements, and to and from home visits, medical appointments, mental health appointments, etc. and they travel approximately 70 hours per month. Often, this task can take full days or longer. Since late 2014, the total number of children in foster care has nearly doubled from 34 to the current number of 59. The opioid epidemic is a significant reason for this increase. As a result, the Foster Care Social Workers are closing in on the State mandated caseload capacity of 15 cases. In addition, Foster Care Social Workers provide an average of 40 supervised family visits each month which amounts to an average of 60 work hours per month.

Mr. Renfroe reported that he contacted 15 like-sized counties to determine how they are handling this problem. He received 12 responses and of those, 10 have hired a Community Social Services Assistant to assist the Foster Care Social Workers. Mr. Renfroe requested Commissioners consider hiring a new position of a Community Social Services Assistant to assist the Foster Care Social Workers in a variety of ways and enable them to have the time and ability to prepare for Juvenile Court and provide a higher level of service to families. Juvenile Court is an area identified as needing more attention and time by the Foster Care Social Workers. The Community Social Services Assistant can also assist with organizing case files, scheduling appointments for children, and assisting with providing transportation to child medical examination appointments for children in the investigation phase of the case. Furthermore, hiring

a Community Social Services Assistant will enable the Social Workers to have more time to thoroughly do their job without having to hire additional Social Worker III positions.

The financial impact would be a total gross cost of \$13,762 for the remaining six months of this fiscal year (\$11,944 salary, \$914 for FICA, \$904 for Retirement Benefits and \$0 for insurance). However, this position would be able to draw down at least 50% of their salary via day sheets, dropping this total amount to \$6,881. The remaining amount could be absorbed into the Social Services approved FY 2018 budget due to lapsed salaries from vacant positions.

Mr. Renfroe requested Commissioners consider hiring a Community Social Services Assistant to provide transportation services and family visitation services to free up the Foster Care Social Workers' workload and allow them to offer a higher level of service.

Commissioner Lemel expressed concern about the low salary rate for a position with such heavy responsibilities. She worried this could cause frequent turnover with this position. Mr. Renfroe said the department will do its best to find the right person for the job. With that said, sometimes people will stay in their jobs for a long time and sometimes they will not; this is true for any position. The person hired would have very close supervision and he expects the Social Workers to ensure the position is being utilized appropriately.

Chairman Chapman inquired about a timeframe for hiring. Mr. Renfroe hopes to advertise for the position very quickly with a start date in January.

Commissioner Lemel moved to allow the Department of Social Services to hire a Community Social Services Assistant to provide transportation services and family visitation supervision to free up our Social Workers' workload and allow them to offer a higher level of service, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

CONNESTEE FIRE RESCUE REQUEST FOR RESERVE FUNDS

Assistant County Manager David McNeill presented this item. Connestee Fire Rescue provides water and dive rescue services to its district and mutual aid to other districts. The department's dive team is an important part of the Emergency Services System. The department is requesting to draw down \$45,000 from its reserves for the replacement of a 25-year-old pontoon boat, used for dive rescue and search responses, and a 14-year-old jet ski, utilized for dive support and other water rescue activities. The department is looking to also purchase a combination trailer that will help improve response and coordination of resources.

In addition, the department is requesting another \$5,000 from its reserves to contract with Ken McJunkin, retired North Carolina Forest Service Ranger, for faster implementation of the Fire Wise program and strategies to reduce potential impacts and losses from wild land fires in the Connestee fire service district.

The Connestee Fire Service District had a reserve balance of \$70,185 as of June, 30, 2017. Provided tax collections meet estimates, the funds are available for the request. The department's finances are in order and there is no concern about drawing down these funds.

Commissioner Lemel moved to approve the request from Connestee Fire Rescue to draw down \$50,000 from reserves to replace a pontoon boat and jet ski and contract with Ken McJunkin for Fire Wise implementation, seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously approved.

MANAGER'S REPORT

The Manager reported the following:

- Scheduling Public Hearing for Project Aiken, an economic development project for November 14; more details to follow with the public advertisement

- Working to schedule the Ecusta Road Industrial Project as a joint meeting with the City of Brevard on November 14, along with the Transylvania Economic Alliance, in order to adopt all of the agreements necessary to make the project work in succession
- Kudos Report!
 - o To Clerk to the Board Trisha Hogan from the Sheriff's office for assistance with research
 - o To Library Director Anna Yount for her presentation on strategic planning at the NC Library Conference

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no comments from the public.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Chappell reported that on November 8-10 Transylvania County will be recognized at the ACT Workforce Summit in Austin for achieving its Work Ready Community designation this year. The NC Chamber Foundation will accept the plaque on behalf of the County. He thanked everyone who had a hand in this accomplishment.

Commissioner Lemel reported that Transylvania County hosted the Institute for Emerging Issues-Crib to Career Workshop on October 11. In attendance were representatives from Buncombe, Henderson, Polk and Transylvania Counties, all of whom are actively engaged in early childhood efforts in their communities. Transylvania County's work has been recognized alongside the work of large counties like Durham, Forsyth, Guilford and Mecklenburg. She said everyone should be proud of the work they have accomplished so far and there is more to come.

Chairman Chapman attended a gala event at the WNC Military History Museum over the weekend. There were approximately 120 guests in attendance. He reported the Museum has recently received its nonprofit status. He encouraged everyone to visit the Museum. There is no cost, but they do accept donations. The Museum will close temporarily in December through February to conduct inventory. Chairman Chapman also asked everyone to keep in their thoughts and prayers the families of the two prison guards killed in an attempted inmate escape in Pasquotank County. He thanked our local law enforcement officers for all they do to keep us safe.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, **Commissioner Lemel moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:57 p.m., seconded by Commissioner Chappell and unanimously carried.**

Larry L. Chapman, Chairman
Transylvania County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Trisha M. Hogan, Clerk to the Board